

Message Text

SECRET

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 PM-05 INR-10 SS-15 SSO-00 INRE-00
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Z O 221038Z MAY 78 ZFF-4
FM AMEMBASSY LAGOS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC FLASH 8531
INFO 21AFOC MCGUIRE IMMEDIATE
HQ USAF WASHDC IMMEDIATE
OASD/ISA IMMEDIATE
MAC SCOTT AFB IL/CAT IMMEDIATE
USDAO KINSHASA ZAIRE
AMEMBASSY KINSHASA IMMEDIATE

S E C R E T LAGOS 6311

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: MOPS, NI, CG
SUBJECT: SHORT NOTICE DIPLOMATIC CLEARANCE

REF: 21AFOC MCGUIRE AFB NU 22040Z MAY 78

1. WE HAVE SUBSTANTIAL MISGIVINGS ABOUT APPROACHING THE NIGERIAN GOVERNMENT FOR APPROVAL TO USE LAGOS AS STOP FOR MAC AIRCRAFT ENROUTE TO ZAIRE. IN NIGERIAN EYES, SUCH A REQUEST IS IN EFFECT ASKING FOR NIGERIAN DE FACTO SUPPORT OF THE WESTERN OPERATIONS IN SHABA. MANY IN NIGERIA WOULD OPPOSE SUCH ACTION AND IF THE FEDERAL MILITARY GOVERNMENT (FMG) APPROVED SUCH FLIGHTS, IT WOULD BE IN RECOGNITION OF THEIR IMPROVED RELATIONS WITH THE U.S. RATHER THAN SUPPORT FOR MOBUTU.

2. FURTHER, NIGERIA WOULD UNDOUBTEDLY BE UNCOMFORTABLE TO BE INCLUDED IN THE SAME CATEGORY AS
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THE IVORY COAST, SENEGAL AND GABON WHICH ARE RECOGNIZED AS HAVING PRO-WESTERN LEANINGS WHILE NIGERIA ALTHOUGH FRIENDLY TO THE U.S. ATTEMPTS TO MAINTAIN A NON-ALIGNED POSTURE.

3. IF NIGERIA DID ACCEDE TO OUR REQUEST, THE PRESENCE OF USAF AIRCRAFT AT LAGOS AIRPORT AND

THEIR PURPOSE WOULD BECOME PUBLIC KNOWLEDGE AND WOULD UNDOUBTEDLY STIR TREMENDOUS DOMESTIC CRITICISM OF THE FMG. IF THE FMG TURNED DOWN OUR REQUEST, THERE WOULD ALSO BE SOME RESENTMENT AT THE U.S. FOR HAVING PUT THEM IN SUCH AN EMBARRASSING POSITION AT A TIME WHEN ITS SUPPORT IS VITAL IN THE ALREADY DOMESTICALLY SENSITIVE NEGOTIATIONS OVER RHODESIA AND NAMIBIA.

4. ON BALANCE, WE BELIEVE U.S. SHOULD ATTEMPT TO USE ALTERNATIVE POSSIBILITIES SUCH AS LIBREVILLE AND PORT BOULET MENTIONED REFTEL. WE WOULD FAVOR APPROACHING FMG ONLY IF AIRLIFT IS IMPOSSIBLE WITHOUT NIGERIAN SUPPORT. IF DEPARTMENT STILL BELIEVES APPROACH SHOULD BE MADE, WE WILL DO SO, BUT BELIEVE IT IS IMPERATIVE THAT EMBASSY BE FURNISHED WITH ANSWERS TO FOLLOWING QUESTIONS WHICH FMG WILL UNDOUBTEDLY ASK BEFORE MAKING ITS DECISION:

A. WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THESE FLIGHTS?

B. WHAT TYPE OF CARGOES WILL THEY CARRY?

C. WILL THESE SUPPLIES BE FOR THE SUPPORT OF THE ARMY OF ZAIRE?

D. WILL THEY ALSO BE USED TO SUPPORT THE
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BELEGIAN AND FRENCH OPERATIONS IN THE CONGO?

5. PLEASE ADVISE.
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NNN

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